LA COUNTY LIBRARY

DIY Library Program

ADULT 101: SEWING BASICS

MAKE YOUR OWN FACE MASK

Recommended for Ages 12-18

There's never a bad time to pick up some new skills! One skill that will come in handy throughout your life, is learning how to sew. During this DIY Library Program, you will learn sewing basics from identifying basic tools for sewing, to learning to thread a needle and stitch fabric by hand, to finally learning to make your own hand-sewn face mask. As a bonus, you will also learn how to craft a no-sew face mask using materials easily found in every home.

There are many reasons why someone should learn how to sew! Here are just a few:

- Makes and saves money
- Helps with well-being by relieving stress and improving focus and concentration
- Can help reduce your environmental impact
- Helps build creativity and individuality
- It's fun!

Sewing dates as far back as 20,000 years ago to the last Ice Age. Archaeologist found needles made of bones that they think were used to sew skins and furs. Sewing was always done by hand until the first sewing machines were developed in the early 19th century. In fact, the first sewing machine was designed by British inventor Thomas Saint in 1790, but none were manufactured until almost 30 year later and many people did not have personal sewing machines in their home until the 1850's. However, whether you have a sewing machine or not, sewing is an important skill used worldwide to manipulate a variety of textiles (i.e. fabrics) to create clothes, shoes, furniture, bags, and more!

Learn more about the history of the sewing machine here in *Inventions in Fashion: From Rawhide to Rayon* by Lisa Hiton. Take a moment to explore other notable inventors in the history of sewing by browsing our *Inventors and Inventions* database. https://lacountylibrary.org/database/

Sewing can be done by anyone! There are many famous male and female designers throughout history. Here is a list of a few you may, or may not, know:

- Daymond John – Founder of FUBU apparel.
- Narciso Rodriguez – Freelance designer who worked with Calvin Klein, Nino Cerruti, and others

- Coco Chanel – Revolutionary female designer
- Ann Lowe – Famous African American female designer
- Clare Waight Keller – First female design chief of the House of Givenchy
- Jason Wu – Freelance designer; Michelle Obama wore his gown to the inaugural ball

Can you name any other famous designers? Check out *Biography in Context* on our Databases page to learn about other influential designers.

Questions for Discussion:

- Why should someone learn how to sew?
- Who should learn to sew?

Hands-on Activities

So, let's start learning how to sew! We will do 3 different activities showing the basics of hand sewing.

Activity #1 will help us identify the basic tools used for sewing.

Activity #2 will teach you to thread a needle.

Activity #3 will teach the basics of hand sewing by making a fabric face mask.

Activity #1: Identify Tools of the Trade

Match the name of each object with its picture. Images found on the next page.

1. Thread ____
2. Needle ____
3. Scissors ____
4. Pins and pin cushion ____
5. Ruler or Tape measure ____
6. Fabric ____
7. Pattern ____
8. Thimble____
9. Fabric chalk or marker ____

A

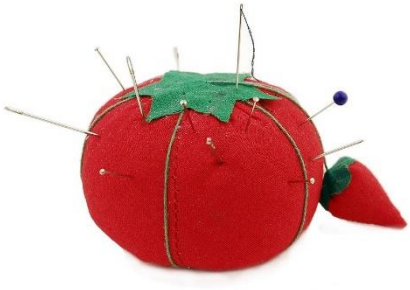
B

C

E

F

G



I

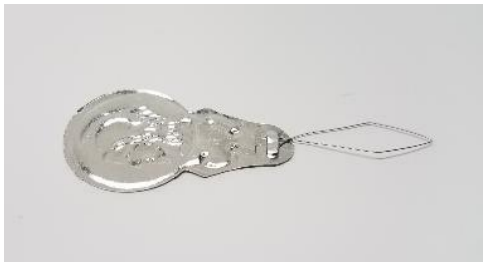
Here are some helpful tips when using these tools:

- Thread color should match or be a shade darker than the color of the fabric.
- Do not use the sewing scissors for cutting other things like paper.
- Tailor's chalk can be removed by wiping it off or with a damp cloth.
- Tape measures work better than rulers for patterns that are over 60 in long.
- Never put pins or needles in your mouth; use the pin cushion.
- Always wear shoes to stay safe from stepping on stray pins or needles.
- If you can, iron your fabric to help with cutting and sewing in a straight line.

ACTIVITY #1 ANSWER KEY:
1. (G) 2. (F) 3. (D) 4. (H) 5. (A) 6. (B) 7. (E) 8. (C) 9. (I)

Activity #2: Threading a Needle

Threading a needle can be difficult since the thread and the eye (round end with the hole) of a needle can be small. There is a tool called *Needle Threader* that can help. It is a small metal tool that has a wire at the end. That wire lets you pinch the thread and slide it through the eye of the needle.



This activity will show how to thread a needle without the threader.

1. Cut the thread at an angle.
2. Hold the thread between your thumb and index finger.
3. Pinch down the thread until you can only see the tip between your fingers.
4. Hold the needle (eye up) in your other hand.
5. Bring the needle down onto the thread. Instead of pushing the thread up into the eye, bring the eye of the needle down.
6. Once the tip of the thread is into the eye, pull the thread through.
7. Tie a knot once the thread is even.

Watch this needle threading tutorial to see how this is done! https://youtu.be/_9Fv8_P9FjI

Activity #3: Hand Sewn Face Mask

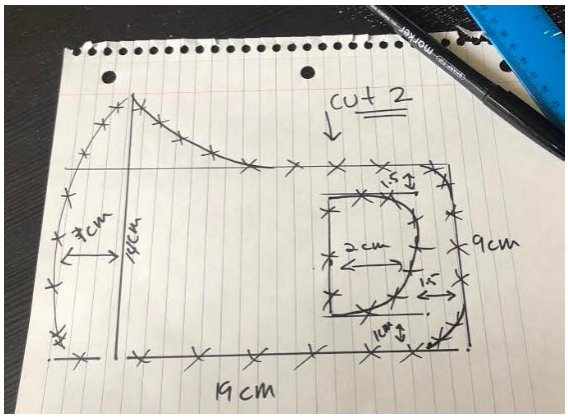
In this activity we will be showing you how to make a hand sewn face mask. You will need the materials listed below:

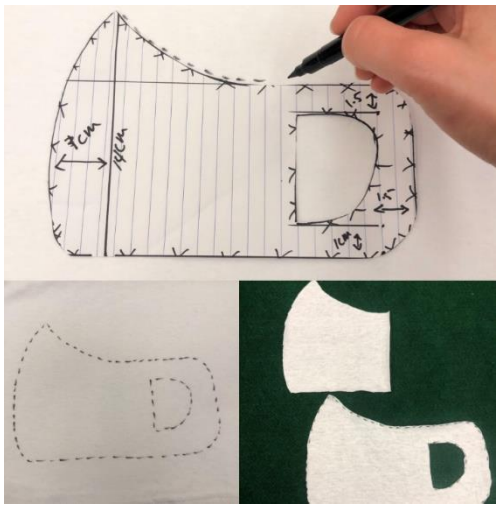
- Scissors
- Fabric (cotton or cotton blend)
- Ruler
- Paper (11 x 14) and pen/pencil to make a pattern
- Needle
- Thread
- Pins and pin cushion
- Fabric chalk (optional)

1. **Make the Pattern –** Using a ruler and pen/pencil, measure out on the sheet of paper the dimensions of your mask. Then cut it out, rounding the end from the ears.

   Length = 19cm **Front edge** = 1cm **Ear hole** = 2 cm

   Height = 14 cm **Ear edge** = 1.5 cm from top, back, and bottom





2. **Prepare the Mask Pieces**
   A. Fold your fabric in half.
   B. Lay your pattern on top and trace it out onto the fabric.
   C. Cut it out (you should have 4 pieces).
   D. On two of the pieces, cut off the ear loops. These pieces will serve as extra lining.

3. Sew the Pieces Together

Before you start sewing, watch this tutorial about basic hand stitches. https://youtu.be/1FknfumFPX8

A. Pin the smaller pieces to the larger ones.

Hint: Make sure that the sharp ends of the pins are pointing toward the center of your material, so you do not poke yourself.

B. Sew those pieces together. Do not sew the side closes to the ear hole. That will serve as a pocket for a filter.

C. Once that is done, place the pieces on top of each other, making sure that the pockets are on the top and bottom of the mask.

D. Pin together the edge. Sew the pieces together along that edge. The side that is sewn will be the inside part of the mask.

E. Open it up and try it on!

Questions to Consider:

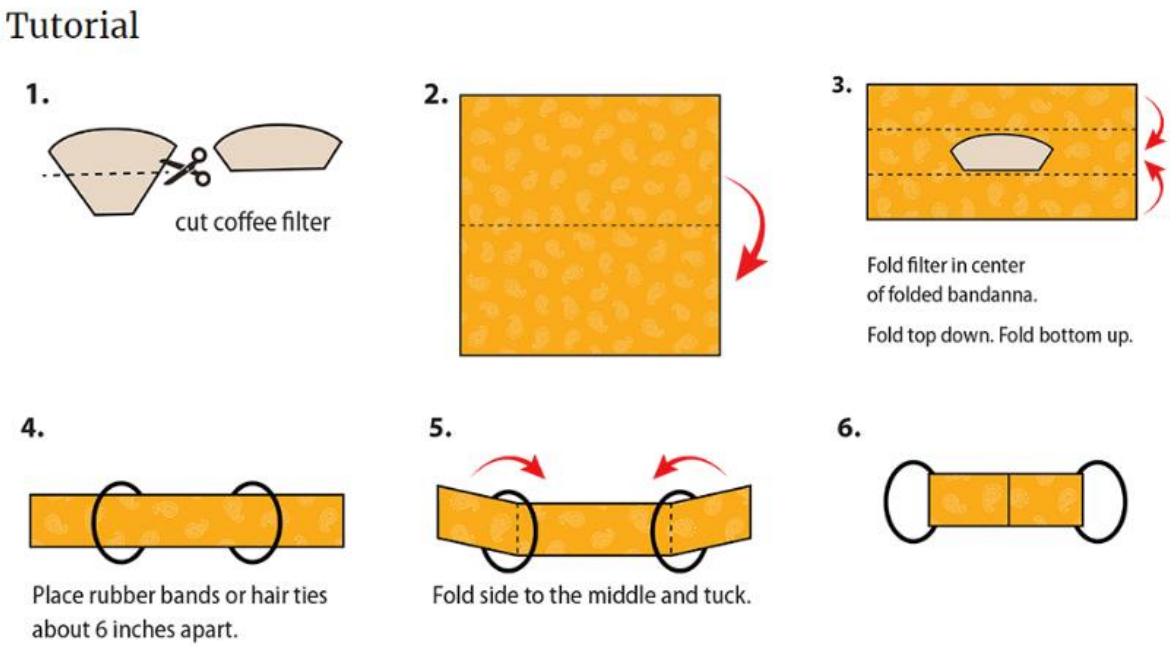
- Why do you think knowing how to sew is a good skill?
- What was the hardest part of the activity for you?
- How would you make the pattern smaller/larger?
- If you do not have pins, what else could you use to hold your work together?

BONUS: Non-Sewn Mask

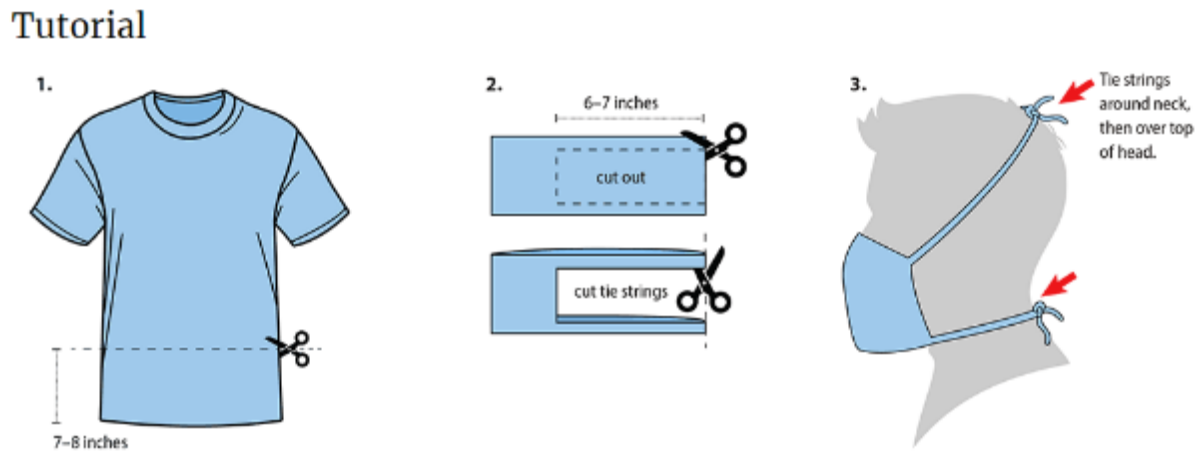
If you tried, but still do not like sewing, never fear! Here are two quick tutorials on no-sew face masks provided by KRCR News.

https://krcrtv.com/north-coast-news/eureka-local-news/how-to-make-face-masks-at-home-sew-and-no-sew-instructions

For this first mask you will need a piece of fabric (bandana, scarf, etc.), scissor, "filter" (coffee filter, paper towel, tissue) and two rubber bands or elastic hair ties.



For this second mask you will need an old t-shirt, scissors, pen/marker and a ruler.



3 things to remember about sewing:

1. Learning to sew has a lot of mental, physical, and financial benefits.
2. Anyone can learn how to sew. It doesn't matter your age, gender or culture.
3. Before you begin a project, make sure you have your tools and patterns.

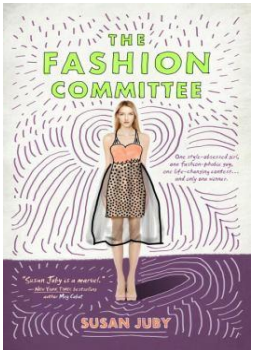
DIGITAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH LA COUNTY LIBRARY

eBooks & Audiobooks

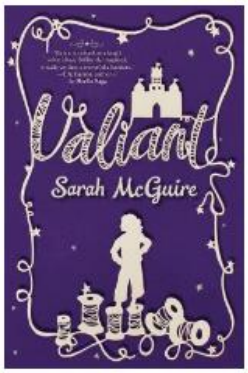
LA County Library offers numerous resources that can help you learn more about sewing and fashion. Here are just a few titles, all of which are available as eBooks on OverDrive, Libby and Hoopla:

Chaotic Good **by Whitney Gardner**

Seventeen year-old Cameron loves two things: cosplay and her dream school, CalArts. When trolls go after her cosplay blog she decides to get even by dressing as a guy and pretending to be her brother whenever she goes into the local comic shop. After infiltrating the male-centered shop she plans to eventually reveal her true self, but when she unexpectedly falls for one of the guys in the local dungeons and dragons crew, she forgets all about her revenge and about her



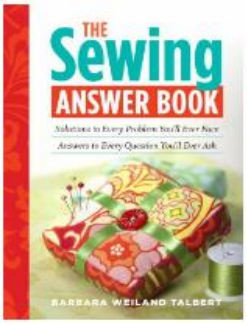
The Fashion Committee **by Susan Juby**
Charlie Dean is a style-obsessed girl who eats, sleeps, and breathes fashion. John Thomas-Smith is a boy who forges metal sculptures in his garage and couldn't care less about clothes. The two go head-to-head competing for a spot at an exclusive arts school where all their artistic dreams could come true.



Valiant **by Sarah McGuire**
Saville hates sewing. How can she not when her father, the Tailor, loves his bolts of velvet and silk far more than he's ever loved her? Yet, when he is struck ill shortly after they arrive in the city of Reggen, Saville must don boy's clothes in the hopes of gaining a commission from the king to keep them fed.

Sewing Happiness: A Year of Simple Projects for Living Well
by Sanae Ishida
When Sanae Ishida was diagnosed with a chronic illness and then lost her corporate job, she decided to focus on things in her life that bring her joy. What she found was sewing. Ishida decided to only sew her and her daughter's clothes for one year and then wrote about the

Refinery29: Style Stalking **by Piera Gelardi**
Get set to build your best-ever wardrobe featuring the hardest-working looks from around the globe with Refinery29—the world's leading style destination—as their editors break down the essentials of the everyday chic, straight from the street.



The Sewing Answer Book **by Barbara Weiland Talbert**
This informative and encouraging guide offers proven solutions to all of your most stubborn sewing problems. No matter your sewing experience or whether you prefer to use a machine or sew by hand, *The Sewing Answer Book* will help you hone your skills while inspiring you to try new and exciting techniques.